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RESEARCH MODEL OF THE DRIVERS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN E-COMMERCE: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTENSIFYING THE DEGREE OF CO-CREATION

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ABSTRACT

E-commerce expansion has been triggered by the rapid development of information as well as the immense government support for IT-related service infrastructure. *E-commerce* transactions in Indonesia for 2018 is estimated to reach USD 130 million or IDR 1.7 trillion. Such amount enables local businessmen to become *e-commerce players in Indonesia, which is currently the largest e-commerce market in Southeast Asia and is the third largest in Asia* after China and India. However, such significant market opportunities are utilized suboptimally by entrepreneurs because of a problem regarding customer behavior. That phenomenon and research gap is addressed in this study. This research proposes a comprehensive conceptual model based on driver factors (customer readiness, level of technologization, and level of connectivity) that constitute the key to success in generating a co-creation experience whose intensity can be increased (degree of co-creation), which plays a role in facilitating the creation of experience for consumers. Therefore, satisfaction with co-creation experience can be created, thereby providing potential effect for consumer behaviors (satisfaction and repurchase intention). The conceptual model in this work was developed according to an empirical study and can be used to conduct research in the development of the e-commerce industry. Empirically, the objective for proposing this model can trigger the research development on co-creation experience, which indicates a new paradigm in the marketing field. Practically, the results of this study can provide insights to e-commerce entrepreneurs for discovering the position of indicators that become the strengths and weaknesses in developing e-commerce businesses.

INTRODUCTION

E-commerce, or business activities conducted by utilizing technology, have been through a rapid development in the past five years. As a new system or paradigm in the business world, e-commerce alters the traditional trade paradigm into electronic commerce by using information and communication technology (ICT) or digital technology. In “*Digital Opportunity*,” Das, Gryseels, Sudhir & Tan (2016) states this digital business will increase the GDP in various sectors and enhance economic participation in all population segments in a state to grow to up to 10%. To utilize the great business opportunities from e-commerce, Das et al. (2016) claims entrepreneurs face many obstacles as they “*define customer-centric experiences to differentiate on design and agility*,”; that is, customer experience can become a weapon to win rivalries through design differentiation. Therefore, company strategies in maintaining consumers to repurchase constitute an important factor for businesspersons in e-commerce (Yulishari et al., 2011).

Few studies have focused on how consumers interact with companies to co-create experience on IT-related services, indicating that questions regarding (Scholl-Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012 and Verleye, 2014). Most studies on e-commerce emphasize the factors that influence online purchasing behavior, such as service quality, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, intention, and satisfaction that adopted the modeling of theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) and the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). These theories have been adopted by several experts (Yulishari et al., 2011; Pappas, Pateli, Giannakos & Chrissikopoulos, 2012; Razak & Marimuthu, 2012 and Rajeswari, 2015) to study online shopping, but limited investigations have been conducted on co-creation experience as a new concept developing along with the shift of the marketing paradigm from goods-dominant logic (GDL) to the novel mindset of service-dominant logic (SDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Currently, numerous investigations using the concept of GDL in many fields, such as tourism, education, and products/services; however, estimates suggest that a limited number of studies analyze the co-creation experience in e-commerce businesses (marketplaces and online shops).

The co-creation experience signifies the role of consumers as co-creators, which means the consumer and the company interact to create experiences together. Consumers can be involved in business processes so that they can co-create value and provide different unique experiences according to the preferences, needs, and capacities of heterogenic consumers. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) confirm “*co-creation experience as the basis for value creation*,” where companies should accommodate high-quality interaction and where competitive advantage can be developed if a joint interaction is present between the company and consumers. To summarize, the company should be able to create an experiential environment where consumers can actively conduct dialog and create their own personalized experiences in relation to the

product/service they desire. Prahalad (2004) proposes four important factors in creating the uniqueness of co-created experiences: dialog, access, risk-benefit scenario, and transparency. Several experts (Etgar, 2008; Hoyer, Chandy, Dorotic, Krafft & Singh, 2010) describe the advantage perceived from co-creating experience, namely, pleasure, knowledge/skill, social, economy, and personal. The advantages perceived by consumers in the co-creation experience can increase the degree of co-creation that shows high-quality interaction.

The level of success of the co-creation experience is highly influenced by driver factors, specifically, from the consumer side as the co-creator actor (customer role and readiness) (Payne, Storbacka & Frow, 2008) and the co-creation environment (level of technologization and connectivity) (Verleye, 2015). Strong driver factors in co-creation experience are suspected to increase behavioral outcomes in online purchasing, including satisfaction and repurchase intention. Several studies (So, Wong & Sculli, 2005; Jin, Park & Kim, 2008; Rose, Moira, Samouel & Hair, 2012 and Fang et al., 2014) support the notion above, which can generate findings in relation to the strong relationship between the two variables. Hence, the satisfaction perceived by consumers will result in the will to repurchase. The relevance between the variables is validated completely in that replication of TPB (Ajzen, 1991) and TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) is performed; nevertheless, Fang et al. (2014) find the relationship between satisfaction and repurchasing is strongly affected by the technical aspect (technology) in the context of online shopping. This outcome represents the gap raised in this study that is represented in the degree of co-creation. It is suspected if the level of co-creation experience reflecting the effectiveness of running factors supporting e-commerce will affect behavioral outcomes. The allegation also answers the research gap posed by Scholl-Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer (2012, p.1491) that “...the companies must establish a proactive measure of how to assess the effect of co-creation toward performance...”

Accordingly, this study aims to propose a modeling of co-creation experience that must be developed from the aspects of drivers (consumer readiness and environment) and consequences (behavioral outcomes). This proposed model can be used as the basis for further research to fill the research gap in the e-commerce context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intensifying the Degree of Co-Creation through Co-Creation Experience

Co-creation experience develops along with the shift of the marketing paradigm from GDL to the SDL initiated by Vargo and Lusch (2008). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) claim co-creation experience is the basis for value creation and innovation in the future. Co-creation value is a new approach introduced by SDL and improved by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) with the idea of a joint production process involving companies and consumers, which is a co-creation experience. In this new approach, companies (suppliers) apply knowledge and capacity toward the production and branding of products/services, and consumers apply knowledge as well their capacity to

meet their needs (Vargo, Maglio & Akaka, 2008). Ultimately, a co-creation experience occurs if consumers and companies (service providers) are involved and cooperate to produce a better product/service offer.

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) affirm the classic concept of “*market*,” namely, “*company-centric*” market that focuses on the occurrence of interaction and the exchange where consumers become a separate part in creating value. However, various transformations of external situations require companies to modify their business landscapes to create “value” that is agreed upon by both companies and consumers (implicit negotiation). The market then becomes an integral part of creating value, that is, in the “*co-creation experience of unique value*.” Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) claim “*co-creation experience as the basis for value creation*,” where companies should accommodate the occurrence of high-quality interactions, and competitive advantages can be built given a joint interaction between companies and consumers (see Figure 1). Essentially, companies must be able to create an experiential environment where consumers can actively dialog and create their own personalized experiences of the products/services they want.

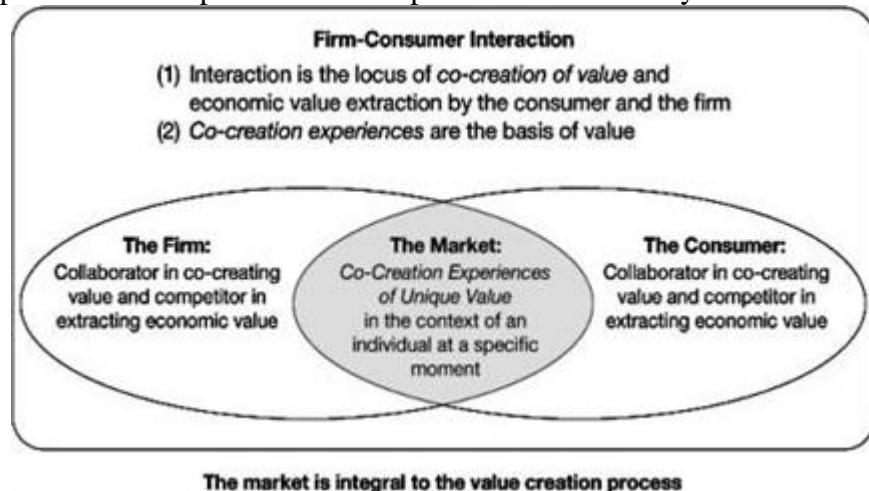


Figure 1. Emerging Concept of the Market
(Source: Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 7)

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) state the company must move from “*firm-centric*” to “*co-creation perspective on value creation*” by being informed, connected, and empowered; having active communities of consumers; and abandoning the old practice that causes cost pressure (low price) making it difficult for companies to build sustainable competitive advantage. Companies cooperate with consumers to create value and play a role in extracting and producing value. Future success will be determined by the company/service provider that succeeds in facilitating co-creation experience. According to various experts (Zeithaml, 2000; Etgar, 2008; Hoyer et al., 2010 and Verleye, 2014), co-creation experience is the collaborative creation of value by the company and consumer that can create a unique and impressive experience, particularly in e-commerce. Dimensions used to measure co-creation experience in the e-commerce context include 1) hedonic benefit: obtaining a

fun experience in the process of online purchase, 2) cognitive benefit: obtaining knowledge and skill, 3) social benefit: being able to contact other consumers/buyers so interaction and sharing information are allowed, 4) personal benefit: obtaining status related to lifestyle, and 5) economic benefit: advantages in the form of compensation and financial aspects.

For e-commerce, the technological aspect has provided “*sense empowerment*,” which can form engagement behavior. The success of co-creation experience can encourage the intensity of co-creation that will be beneficial for both the consumer and the company. From the company side, the consumer can provide innovative ideas on the products/services to aid the company in generating creative and effect new offers In today’s technological development era, consumers can easily communicate various ideas to companies through websites, e-mails, and social networks. Qiao and Zhang (2011) argue that the model of the degree of co-creation in the business-to-consumer (B2C) environment can identify factors that can affect the degree of co-creation (see Figure 2). For the co-creation value to produce a positive and critical effect, companies are required to manage various factors effectively.

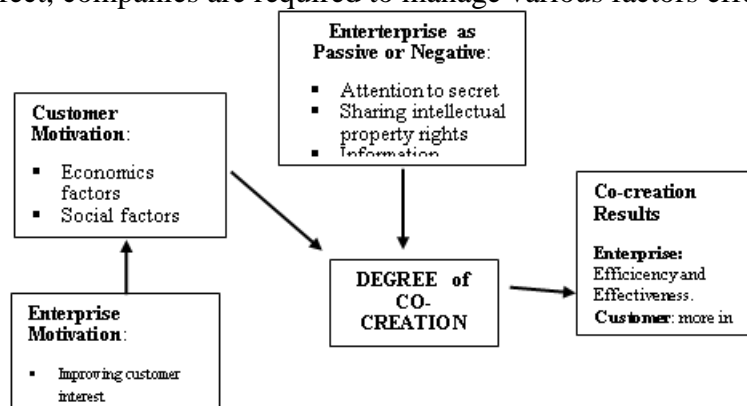


Figure 2. Co-creation Degree Model

(Source: Qiao & Zhang, 2011, p. 399)

According to Qiao and Zhang (2011), the degree of co-creation is highly influenced by consumer motivation. Besides the motivational factor, positive or good incentives also affect the degree of co-creation. Some co-creating customers are motivated by the financial aspect through which intellectual property is possible. Some effects are in the forms of social benefits, such as status upgrading, social esteem, good citizenship, and the strengthening of relations with other consumers. Some consumers may be motivated by the will to acquire technological knowledge through participation in forums and learning processes. Lastly, consumers may participate for psychological reasons, namely, enhancing self-expression.

Aside from the positive aspects on the consumer side (attitude and behavior), companies also often discover limitations and obstacles in the form of negative consumer attitudes and behaviors in co-creating value: 1) the need for transparency, where companies have secretive matters that should remain unknown to consumers (property rights), 2) co-creation processes that obtain input from consumers often cause information overload that results in difficulty

in screening millions of ideas. Conversely, the development of new products often faces a tight schedule, and 3) many consumer ideas might be infeasible and cannot be used by the company. This condition results in suboptimal co-creation potential.

Therefore, to increase the degree of co-creation, a strong motivation from the company is required to facilitate and support co-creation value with consumers optimally, as Payne et al. (2008) states, “[a] *company has to provide relevant information and necessary resources.*” Hence, the communication and interaction aspects, as well as the follow up between both parties, can increase co-creation and progressively strengthen the relationship between consumers and the company, which, in turn, can enhance satisfaction and loyalty. In the IT-innovation context, some studies (Auh, Bell, McLeod & Shih, 2007; Füller, Matzler & Hoppe, 2009) emphasize that several aspects, such as facilities and infrastructures (technology base), and communication between the company and consumers, that are always maintained can provide a significant drive to the degree of co-creation. Moreover, Scholl-Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) state the higher the support the company provides to the consumer, the bigger the customer’s will to maintain an exchange relationship with the company, which can intensify the degree of co-creation.

Many consumers are interested in co-creation, but only a few want to contribute fully and offer their skills and knowledge in the co-creation process. Therefore, a company should be able to identify consumer participation properly to cooperate and mainly to discover good customers. Currently, companies can identify consumers who are willing and able to participate in co-creation activity according to the adoption of a product/service innovation. That is, those classified as innovators lead users and market mavens (adoption process). Although the possibility of participation in co-creation is high, not all consumers wish to do so. Consumers decide whether they want to join by considering several factors, such as economy, social, technical, and physical factors. In the e-commerce context, the degree of co-creation shows the intensity of consumer interaction with the company to increase the co-creation experience measured through the intensity of communication and the interaction facilitated by the company (Auh et al., 2007; Füller et al., 2009; Scholl-Grisseman & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; and Ginting, 2016).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Propositions

Co-creation experience is the core concept of SDL and becomes the main premise of customer interaction that provides a good value/experience for consumers themselves or the company (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Payne et al., 2008). Support through the active participation of consumers for effective co-creation experience is necessary. Thus, consumer readiness is important so that consumers are motivated to fulfill the role to be involved in co-creating value with the company. Auh et al. (2007) claim the role of consumer readiness depends on the ability to fulfill the expectation of the company. Technologization level also becomes an important factor to ensure that the co-creation experience can run well. Technologization indicates the availability of

online support facilities and equipment that can help in completing co-creation tasks (Thomke & von Hippel, 2002 and Franke et al., 2010). The level of connectivity must be supported by reliable and easy-to-operate technology infrastructure, so that it can facilitate the connectivity between the company and consumers and between the consumers themselves; thus, connectivity should provide a better experience for consumers such that they succeed as co-creators (Alam, 2002 and Franke et al., 2010). Results from several empirical studies were used as bases for the following propositions:

Proposition 1: Co-creation experience (hedonic, cognitive, social, economic, and personal) must be supported by customer role and readiness, level of technologization, and level of connectivity.

Co-creation experience depends on the level wherein expected advantages can be met (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2013). In essence, to increase the degree of co-creation, a strong motivation from the company is required to facilitate and support co-creation experience with consumers optimally. As Payne et al. (2008) claim, “[the] company has to provide relevant information and necessary resources.” Therefore, communication and interaction aspects, as well as the follow up between both parties can increase co-creation and further strengthen the relationship between the consumer and the company, which, in turn, will increase satisfaction and loyalty. In the IT-innovation context, several studies (Auh et al., 2007 and Füller et al., 2009) find several aspects, such as supporting facilities and infrastructures (technology base), and a well-maintained communication between the company and the consumer, can provide a significant support to the degree of co-creation. Scholl-Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) assert that the higher the support the company provides to the consumer, the more the customer’s will to maintain the exchange relationship with the company, which can further enhance the degree of co-creation. On the basis of the opinions and the support from prior empirical research, the next proposition is made:

Proposition 2: Success in increasing the degree of co-creation is influenced by the efforts of the company in developing co-creation experience.

In general, corporate success can be identified by customer satisfaction and other behavioral measurements, which affect the financial aspects of the company (profit) (Zeithaml et al., 2013). Theory of consumer satisfaction emphasizes the paradigm of confirmation–disconfirmation, meaning consumer satisfaction is a comparison between expectation and reality (Oliver, 1981). Consumer satisfaction constructs are usually related closely to consumer behavior. Hoog, Abrams & Brewer (2017) state one’s social identity can be shaped and enhanced by co-creation activities. If a company can manage the needs of the consumer as a social being that requires attachment to the community, then it can improve positive perceptions and expected actions. If the consumer is involved in the service development process, such involvement will create a feeling that they are part of the company, which will have an effect on satisfaction. This condition will also encourage positive behavior that

increases re-purchase intention. If the consumer in the e-commerce business is involved in the value creation process together with the company, then such consumer will feel satisfied and will repurchase and recommend to others. Given the opinions and the support of prior empirical research, the next proposition is made:

Proposition 3: Satisfaction and repurchase intention in e-commerce must be supported by the degree of co-creation.

In general, consumer ratings of products/services offered by a business are strongly influenced by the overall satisfaction of the services offered (Zeithaml et al., 2013). If the company feels that the contribution to the creation of shared experiences is not well-distributed, then the satisfaction of the company will decrease. Hence, if the consumer provides support (input) on product/service development and they do not feel valued by the company, then this situation can affect the sense of satisfaction and the will to repurchase and recommend to other consumers, as indicated by the theories and findings of previous research on equity theory (Oliver, 1977). Given the opinions and the support of extant empirical studies, the next proposition is made:

Proposition 4: Higher satisfaction and repurchase intention in e-commerce are influenced by the satisfaction with the co-creation experience.

The Conceptual Model

According to these propositions, the conceptual model of drivers and consequences of customer experience in e-commerce in relation to the importance of intensifying degree co-creation is as follow (see Figure 2).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The development of business activities utilizing technology, known as e-commerce, experienced very rapid growth within a period of five years and can increase GDP growth in various sectors as well as an economic participation in all segments of the population in a country. The success of e-commerce

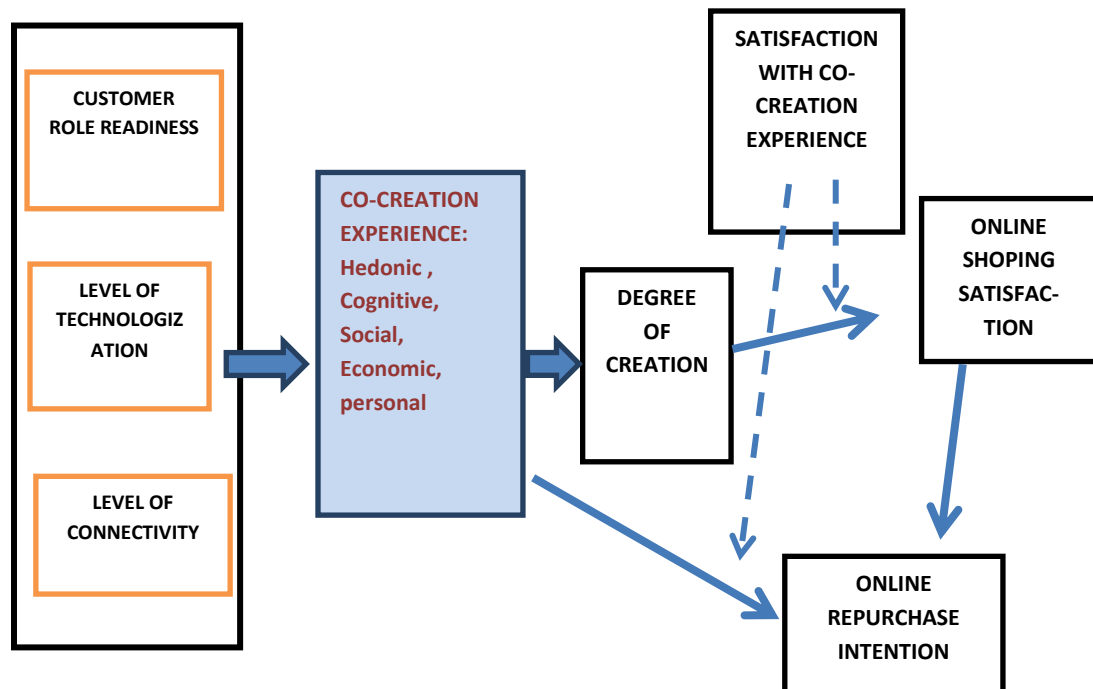


Figure 3. The Conceptual Model
(Source: Author)

Development with the characteristics of IT-related service success is influenced strongly by the ability of business players to offer customer experience in the service process. Creating a shared experience or co-creation experience can be an important factor for intense interaction between companies and consumers. The conceptual model proposed can provide facts in the field of how far co-creation experience can make consumers benefit economically, personally, socially, and in relation to pleasure, which, in turn, can be affected by three driver factors: 1) customer readiness that shows the clarity of the role, motivation, and ability to perform assignments requested by the company in co-creating *value* (Payne et al., 2008 and Verleye, 2014); 2) level of technologization, which is the availability of technological means that can facilitate co-creation that can provide a unique experience for the consumer (Thomke & von Hippel, 2002; Franke, Keinz, & Schreier, 2008); and 3) level of connectivity as the availability of facilities and infrastructure for consumers to be connected to the company and to other consumers.

Next, the degree of co-creation that shows the intensity of interaction between consumers and the company is influenced considerably by the co-creation experience (Auh et al., 2007; Füller, 2010 and Scholl-Grisseman & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012), where co-creation experience is the creation of experience between the company and the consumer that can produce unique and impressive experiences in e-commerce (Zeithaml, 2000; Etgar, 2008; Hoyer et al., 2010 and Verleye, 2014). Such remarkable experiences will lead to satisfaction with the co-creation experience, described as the satisfaction perceived by consumers at the time of the co-creation experience with the

company, wherein consumers play a role as co-producer (Oliver, 1977; Prahalad, 2004 and Payne et al., 2008). Higher intensity of co-creation influenced by co-creation experiences can influence consumer behavior in e-commerce, including 1) satisfaction as content felt by consumers when conducting e-commerce transactions (shopping, buying, and delivery) (Oliver, 1981) and 2) repurchase intention as the willingness or strong intention to re-transact through e-commerce (Smith & Sivakumar, 2004).

The conceptual model proposed can be used for research-based modeling that can be proven by exploring the facts in the field. In the context of e-commerce in Indonesia, this modeling can be applied as a reference for providing scientific and factual information on the behavioral aspect from the consumer side as well as to fill existing scientific gaps. This conceptual model can be employed as the basis for research to provide input for business players to utilize opportunities from the e-commerce market that has been hampered by consumer buying behavior. Several research results show consumers involved in e-commerce are not fully comfortable and confident in doing transactions because of several aspects, namely, trust, privacy, insecurity, online payment system, privacy, and hacking (Al Karim, 2013 and Rajeswari, 2015).

E-commerce in Indonesia has immense potential. The Economy Census Data 2016 from Statistics Indonesia claims that the growth of the e-commerce industry in Indonesia in the decade is around 17%, with business reaching a total of 26.2 million units (Das et al., 2016). In “*Unlocking Indonesia’s Digital Opportunity*,” Das et al. (2016) also mentions the shift to the digital domain will increase economic growth for up to USD 150 billion in 2025. Another source asserts the transaction value of e-commerce in Indonesia in 2018 is estimated to reach USD 130 million (or IDR 1.7 trillion). This considerable amount of transactions has also provided opportunities for Indonesia to become the largest player of e-commerce in South East Asia and become the third largest e-commerce market after China and India (Das et al., 2016). Several reasons explain the large e-commerce transaction value in Indonesia, such as 1) Indonesians have the largest proportion of smartphone users in South East Asia (70% of the total population), 2) the emergence of personal businesses that can compete with big retailers, 3) the presence of more developed rural areas, and 4) the Indonesian’s love of social media (92% of Indonesians have Facebook accounts).

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed conceptual model can be used as a reference for greater accuracy on research using real circumstances, particularly those related to behavioral aspects seen from the consumer side that remain unresolved. In addition, the modeling in this work presents a development of previous empirical studies and is expected to provide a scientific study that can generate practical impacts for entrepreneurs in the e-commerce industry. Empirically, this model can provide an impetus for research on co-creation experience as a new paradigm in the marketing field. Practically, the results of this study can provide insights to e-commerce entrepreneurs for discovering the position of

indicators that become the strengths and weaknesses in developing e-commerce businesses.

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